Decline in Cultivation

943, SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the total area under cultivation is coming down in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether repeal of ULCRA will encourage construction on agricultural land; and

(d) whether any study has been done in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The total cultivated area (net sown area + current fallows) in the country has, more or less, remained constant at around 156 million hectares.

(c) The land which is mainly used for agricultural purposes was not deemed to be urban land and did not come under purview of the Act vide Section 2(o) and Explanation (c) under Section 2(o) of the Urban land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, 1976. The repeal of the Act is not, therefore, likely to have any implication on agricultural land.

(d) No study was conducted.

Efforts to Increase Food Production

944. DR. Y. LAKSHMl PRASAD:
SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH:
SHRI S. RAMACHANDRA REDDY:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

whether Government have taken steps for increasing food production and gearing up the financial sector for more funds for agriculture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): Department of Agriculture and Co-operation is Implementing a number of crop oriented production programmes covering rice, wheat, coarse cereals, sugarcane, oilseeds, pulses and cotton. For gearing up the financial sector for more funds for agricultural sector, Kisan Credit Card Scheme has been launched by all public sector banks besides introduction of at least one specialised agricultural bank in each state to cater to the needs of high tech agriculture.

Assistance to U.P. and Bihar from National Calamity Fund

945. SHRI JANARADAN YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether all reports have been received from Government of Bihar and U.P. for grant of assistance from the National Calamity Fund and the fund for natural calamity;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the details of the information which is awaited;

(d) the details of the funds released so far and dates on which they have been released; and

(e) whether any of the funds in term of amount and dates received by State go beyond the parameters set by the Finance Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (d) During 1998-99, the Government of Bihar had requested for assistance of Rs. 1003.75 crore from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR) in the wake of floods, and the Government of Uttar Pradesh had requested for assistance of Rs. 2139.49 crore from the NFCR in the wake of floods/landlides. The requestes are at various stages of process in accordance with the established procedure for assistance from the NFCR.

Government of Uttar Pradesh had also requested for assistance of Rs. 114.81 crore from 'the NFCR in the wake of

hailstorms/rains. The request was examined and it was found that the calamity could not prima-facie be treated as one of rare severity to qualify for assistance from the NFCR.

An allocation of Rs. 57.63 crore (inculding Central share of Rs. 43.22 crore) has been made to Bihar under the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) during 1998-99. The entire Central share has been released to the State. The first quarterly instalment of Central share was released on 1.4.1998, second on 1.7.1998 and the third and fourth in advance on 28.7.1998, An allocation of Rs. 138.76 crore (including Central share of Rs. 104.07 crore) has been made to Uttar Pradesh under the CRF during 1998-99. The entire Central share has been released to the State. The first quarterly instalment of Central share was released on 1.4.1998, second on 1.7.1998, third in advance on 25.8.1998 and fourth in advance on 27.8.1998. The first quarterly instalment of Central share of the CRF for 1999-2000 amounting to Rs. 27.125 crore has also been released to the Government of Uttar Pradesh on 2.12.1998, in advance.

(e) No, Sir.

Seed Banks for Better Varieties

946. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a policy to develop Seed Banks to maintain quality of varieties of seeds for use in case of inadequate rainfall in the country;

(b) whether any suggestion has been made by the Commission of Agricultural Coasts and Prices;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the steps proposed in this regard;

(e) whether there is a pilot project proposed for Andhra Pradesh; and

(f) if so, status of this matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation is formulating a Central Sector Scheme for Establishment and Maintenance of Seed Banks to ensure timely availability of seeds to the farmers and also to take care of the special requirement of seeds at the time of natural calamity

(b) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Commission for Agricultural Coast & Prices have recommended that the Government should develop Seed Banks to maintain adequate quantities of alternative varieties of crops which can be sown in delayed and inadequate rainfall situation in different regions of the country. Accourdingly, the Seed Bank Scheme has been proposed.

(e) and (f) There is no pilot project for Andhra Pradesh. However, various State Seed Corporations, including Andhra Pradesh State Seed Corporation, will participate in the Seed Bank Scheme.

Proposal to give Industry Status to the Agriculture Sector

947. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has made specific proposal in its recently conducted "Agro-Tech, 98" for reform in Agricultural Sector, demanding, *inter alia* that agricultural be given the status of industry;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) whether as a part of reform Government would be willing to allow free movement of agricultural products throughout the country to enable the farmers to get remunerative prices and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir.